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Eminem Breaks Silence On Proof; Rapper's Lawyer Denies He Shot First

D12 partner, longtime friend encourages fans to focus on Proof's life, not death.

By Gil Kaufman

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After two days of private mourning, Eminem broke his public silence late Thursday on the death of his best friend Proof, as the slain rapper's lawyer refuted police reports that he shot first in Tuesday morning's incident at Detroit's CCC Club.

"You don't know where to begin when you lose somebody who's been such a big part of your life for so long. Proof and I were brothers," Eminem said in a statement regarding the death of his D12 partner, longtime onstage hype man and closest friend (see [article id="1528386"]"D12's Proof Shot And Killed At Detroit Club"[/article]). "He pushed me to become who I am. Without Proof's guidance and encouragement there would have been a Marshall Mathers, but probably not an Eminem and certainly never a Slim Shady. Not a day will go by without his spirit and influence around us all. He will be missed as a friend, father and both the heart and ambassador of Detroit hip-hop."

Though the focus since Tuesday's incident has been on reports from police that it was 32-year-old Proof (born DeShaun Holton) who fired first, shooting Keith Bender Jr. in the face before he was fatally shot by another man (see [article id="1528549"]"Suspect In Proof Slaying Turns Himself In"[/article]), Eminem encouraged fans to remember the life of Proof, not his death.

"Right now, there's a lot of people focusing on the way he died," Eminem said."I want to remember the way he lived. Proof was funny, he was smart, he was charming. He inspired everyone around him. He can never, ever be replaced. He was, and always will be, my best friend" (see [article id="1528405"]"Proof: 'Eminem's Best Friend' And A Vital Member Of Detroit's Hip-Hop Scene"[/article]).

On Thursday, Proof's lawyer, David Gorosh, strongly questioned police claims that his client fired first (see [article id="1528465"]"Details In Proof Shooting Emerge As Police, Second Victim's Family Speak Out" [/article]). "To indicate that Proof pulled the trigger first is reckless and quite frankly it will be proved to be untrue," Gorosh said, according to the *Detroit Free Press*.